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ABSTRACT

A study investigated how students felt about the "extra" reading activities and opportunities offered to them through an after-school recreational reading program. Ten fifth-grade students who were deemed most critically in need in terms of academic progress were observed in the after-school reading activities and were interviewed. Six themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) "the disadvantaged student" (moving from school to school and lack of opportunities to participate in activities unless provided by the school); (2) "rules and rewards"; (3) "meaningful reading" (where students spoke of their reading difficulties); (4) "boring reading"; (5) "adult influences" both positive and negative; and (6) "reading aloud." Results also indicated that the use of rewards to encourage students to both attend the program and to read apparently worked initially, and was still working for some students; and the students themselves questioned the value of the program in serving their particular reading needs and wishes. (Contains nine references. Appendixes present observation questions, interview questions, and the interview form.) (RS)

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A STUDY OF A RECREATIONAL READING PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
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A Study of a Recreational Reading Program for Disadvantaged Fifth Grade Students

Part 1 - The Research Project

Overview:

As Richmond Community Schools' Chapter 1 traveling Reading Resource Teacher, part of my responsibilities include continuous review of each building's Chapter 1 program and its impact upon students in a variety of ways. In the course of these responsibilities, I must provide feedback to the Director of Chapter 1, along with all other Chapter 1 personnel, building staffs, parents, students, and others involved in the program, regarding how we are doing in improving students' overall academic achievement/success in the regular classroom and gains (or losses) on state mandated standardized test scores in the area of reading.

To obtain greater student input in the program evaluation process, I chose to do a qualitative research study that would enable me to gain a valuable perspective on the after-school recreational reading program sponsored by Chapter 1 for students in grades one through five. My goal was to better understand this program from the students' perceptions, an evaluation tool we had not yet utilized in past building/program reviews.

The purpose of this research project was to become more personal in utilizing a naturalistic approach to determine how students felt about the "extra" reading activities and opportunities offered to them through the after-school recreational reading program. Through the observation and interview processes, information was gathered from students regarding the after-school reading program that could be used as a means of improving the program, both in terms of the structure of the program itself and in terms of knowing what students feel about reading in general. Specifically, and initially, I was interested in knowing how the after-school recreational reading program structure was perceived from the students' point of view--planned reading activities, rewards or incentives used to encourage reading, program guidelines, and so on. A secondary purpose began to emerge during observations as I became interested also in understanding the students' feelings toward certain reading materials, why some activities appeared "more fun" than others, and the students' perceptions regarding how they best learned to read.

Method:

In my Chapter 1 role, I am in and out of buildings often. Staff and students alike are familiar with my presence in their buildings. This was to my advantage in both observing students during the after-school reading activities as well as during the interviews with students.

Fifth grade students were observed and interviewed in an urban neighborhood school surrounded by mostly low-income housing, a targeting factor for Chapter 1 services to students in the building. In this school, as well as in the group of students included in this study, two parent families are a rarity and unemployment is high. The school, which is clean and well-maintained, serves as a neighborhood base and offers many no- or low-cost programs to residents of the area, including Chapter 1 sponsored parenting and literacy courses, Chapter 1 sponsored trips to museums or plays, the Chapter 1 sponsored after-school reading program, and opportunities for children in the neighborhood to participate in Girls/Boys Club, Girl/Boy Scouts, the DARE program, and so on.

I chose fifth grade students for this study for three reasons: they would be leaving the program at the end of the school year when they were promoted to middle school; the older elementary students might express their feelings and perceptions in a more natural, confident manner than perhaps younger students might exhibit; and, I have found that this age student, when presented with opportunities to offer input that may benefit other students, especially younger ones, tend to be honest and direct in their responses. These students generally appear less concerned about answering questions in a manner that they "think" the teacher wants to hear.

While several fifth grade students were designated as Chapter 1 eligible in this building, meaning that they fell below the anticipated level of academic performance in the area of reading for their particular age group, the ten selected to be the focus of my observations and interviews for this study were deemed most critical in need in terms of their academic progress. The number of students observed in the after-school reading activities varied from week to week, from six to all ten students, both male and female of three ethnic groups, Caucasian, Black, and Hispanic. I was able to interview nine of the ten students observed.

Observation Questions:

A potential list of questions regarding the observations was developed to help focus my attention during the observational process. In general, these questions, as listed in the Appendix, pertained to the kinds of reading activities in which the students were engaged; the interactions observed between students and adults, as well as between peers; whether students appeared to enjoy the reading activities and the reading program in general; and, as time passed, whether the after-school recreational reading program was used for other forms of school-related student work--that is, activities not related to reading for enjoyment.

Although all grade levels participated in the after-school reading program in this building, students were assigned to various parts of the building for their activities which lasted from 30 to 50 minutes in length, depending upon other events occurring on the day of the program. Fifth grade students were usually assigned to, and observed in, the library where they generally sat very quietly on mats on the floor, rested against walls or book cases, or sat at tables. They were under the direction of the librarian and two or three other adults, a teacher, assistants, or parent volunteers. Interviews, which lasted from 15 to 30 minutes in length, were conducted individually in a small, bright room used for speech and hearing therapy two mornings a week.

Interview Questions:

Through my observations and the questions designed to focus my attention on the purpose of this study, a second set of questions was developed for use in the student interview process. These questions, also listed in the Appendix, were designed to give me a clearer understanding of how the students viewed the after-school reading program, what activities were enjoyable or not enjoyable, why students chose to stay and read or why they did not stay, students' interpretation of the program, what benefits or rewards were to be gained from the program for them, and what aspects of the program they felt could be improved upon or changed in some way to make it more meaningful and enjoyable for them and, perhaps, for others as well.

While the observations were accomplished during group activities in

various parts of the school, each semi-structured interview was conducted in the uninterrupted private setting between individual students and myself. I found all students to be mostly pleasant and willing participants in the interview process. The original set of questions developed for the interview portion of this study was designed in a brief form to lead me through the interview process. Answers were recorded by hand in abbreviated detail initially, with much more recalled detail inserted immediately thereafter. Basically, the process used was one in which the student engaged in telling me about the program, his or her perspectives and feelings about the program and reading in general, and my jotting notes where appropriate on the interview sheet. Student responses generated the order of questions. Items not covered in this manner were then explicitly asked or expanded upon as the need arose. The abbreviated interview sheet may be found in the Appendix.

Analysis:

Utilizing a focusing process of finding topics, then emerging categories from those topics, and finally developing patterns or themes from the emerging categories, several major categories of interest were developed as the observations and interviews were read, reread, and analyzed. These categories revealed who the students were, their perception of the reading program in terms of "rules", student reading choices and preferences, adult interaction with students, both negative and positive, student feelings about their successes or lack of successes in reading, the kinds of rewards that could be earned and perceptions about those rewards, and ways in which students indicated they most enjoyed reading or learning new words.

Specific themes began to appear throughout these various categories, both during the observations and during the interviews. In Theme 1, The Disadvantaged Student, a collective student voice developed early on in which students spoke of moving from school to school several times in their elementary years, of difficulty in making and keeping friends because of these many moves, and of their lack of opportunities to participate in certain activities unless provided by the school (such as the family trip to the museum). Student language often revealed a lack of sophistication in overall language development, a prerequisite to the development of reading skills.

In Theme 2, Rules and Rewards, the students' perception of the reading program itself emerged. There appeared to be a clear understanding of the rules and what must be done to earn credit for reading even though students did not always agree with the rules or structure of the program and sometimes questioned whether the program was designed to fit their particular situations or needs. At the same time, students expressed a sense of pride in earning rewards for their reading efforts.

Students spoke of their reading difficulties in Theme 3, Meaningful Reading. They spoke of having to select certain books such as adult-directed chapter books as opposed to magazines or other self-directed choices, of no one asking them about their reading abilities or activities, and of age-appropriate "words" being more important to adults than books being read for pleasure or understanding.

A spin-off the above theme emerged in Theme 4, Boring Reading, in which students related likes and dislikes regarding adult supervision and interactions during the after-school reading time. Having adults telling them to be quiet, not being able to read with peers or share books with others, having to do school work instead of reading for pleasure in the after-school reading program, and "doing the same old thing week after week" made for a boring time for several students.

Adult Influences, both positive and negative, then emerged as Theme 5. While students complained about the lack of adult involvement in the reading program in terms of sharing reading activities with them, or about adults making them "follow the rules" and keeping them quiet, every student, nevertheless, had something to say about a positive adult interaction that kept the students coming back most of the time.

Throughout the observations and interviews, the student perceptions discussed in Theme 6, Reading Aloud, clearly indicated that students were happiest and most excited when someone read to them or when they could read to others, especially younger children. Conversations about this activity were related to "feeling important," "being the teacher," "helping others," "being able to read the words" in the books read to younger children, and mostly feeling good about how much the younger children appeared to like being read to by the fifth graders. And yet, throughout, students bemoaned the fact that such activities were limited and few.

Part II - Interpretation of Study

In the following discussion pertaining to the interpretation of this study, student names have been omitted to maintain the anonymity promised during the interview process. In place of names, I have used R1 or R2, meaning Respondent 1 or Respondent 2 and so on. I have substituted the letters 'IN' for myself as the interviewer.

Theme 1 - Disadvantaged Students

As has been stated earlier in this paper, the school and neighborhood in which the students lived was considered low-income with many families below poverty level. Families seldom owned their own homes; instead, most rented. A critical point regarding the students observed and interviewed had to do with the many moves some of them have made during the first five or six years of their elementary school careers.

> R1: Well, I've been here some this year, since back before Halloween. Before that I was in another school and last year I was here some, too, about half the year.

> R2: I come here last year in February.
> IN: Where were you before you came here?
> R2: Oh, lots of places. I been in this school three times already.
> IN: What's the longest you have been in a school?
> R2: If we don't move this year, this will be the longest, but Mama's already talkin' about it--movin' again. She don't like staying in one place.
> IN: Why is that, do you know?
> R2: She says too many things catch up to you. It's better to leave things behind.

Because the students do tend to move quite often, the after-school reading program offered them an opportunity to make friends and to be with friends more often than they otherwise might have been. Having friends seemed important.

> R2: My friends stay (after school to read), so it's OK.

R3: Well, I'm new here (since November 9th) and I know it's hard to be new. People shouldn't make fun of people. Everybody looked at me when I first came.
IN: Is it better for you now?
R3: I'm not new no more. I have some friends now and it's not so bad.

Key point: After-school programs such as the recreational reading program do provide a needed social outlet for disadvantaged students. Because these students often move, and because they do not have the means to keep in touch with former friends, such a program is beneficial in establishing and maintaining friendships, even if only for a short while.

Theme 2 - Rules and Rewards

Students expressed both positive and negative points of view regarding the after-school recreational reading program's structure, which can be found woven throughout several other themes as well, referring to this as "the rules." For example, having to have a parent sign a form to verify that the student had read at home before credit could be given for any time read at home was a problem for some students.

R8: (Last year) She say she don't know I read 'les I read to her so I read to her every night some and she sign the paper. Now she's workin' and don't know if I read so I won't earn nuthin' this year.

Most students knew precisely what rewards were offered for certain benchmark reading times established in "the rules" during the course of the year.

R1: Then, I can get some credit toward something for reading--like take a trip or win something.
IN: What kinds of things can you win?
R1: Last year I won a jacket for reading and some certificates and some coupons and stuff. This year I can win a T-shirt.

Students all agreed that the rewards were special to them. However, there was discussion regarding the choice of rewards. Many expressed

interest in being able to choose a reward for reading, such as attending a professional sporting event. This appeared to be something out of their reach except through the media. One was quick to point out, however, that such a trip was frowned upon.

> R5: It ain't allowed. What we do has to be educational. We have to *learn* something if we go someplace. That's how come we go to the museum.

Nevertheless, rewards made the students and their parents (according to the students) feel proud of their accomplishments.

> IN: Did you get a jacket last year?
> R8: Yeah.
> IN: How did that make you feel?
> R8: It made me feel proud. My mom was proud, too.

> IN: How did that make you feel?
> R1: You mean for earning that stuff?
> IN: Yes.
> R1: Well, good, really. A bunch of us kids got those things in both schools. We all liked it a lot.

Key point: While students may not agree with "the rules" of the program, the rewards are important to them, especially for those whose families lack the means to provide them with "extras" such as have been provided in this program. Also, the rewards were perceived by students (and apparently by parents) as recognition for student successes.

Theme 3 - Meaningful Reading

In spite of liking the rewards and being willing to read for rewards, students indicated that questions were seldom asked of them by adults in charge of the after-school program or by parents at home regarding what they had read. There seemed to be an apparent feeling among the students that even though the recreational reading program is supposed to be important and is supposed to help them improve their reading abilities, a student can basically bluff his or her way through it at times.

R8: The 'sistant don't care what you read if you don't make no trouble. You don't have to be readin', see. You can just sit there. She don't know you ain't readin'. You just can't make no trouble or she know you not readin'.

R6: No. I didn't read that much. Nobody cares if you read or not.

Some students also indicated that this same lack of attention to their reading by adults was in place during the school day as well.

IN: Does anyone else talk to you about reading or your work (in reading) at school?
R1: Like who?
IN: Well, maybe the principals, or your classroom teachers, or the school counselors?
R1: Well, the principals, they both are nice to me but they don't ask me 'bout my work. The teachers ask me what I do in the other school and how did I do on it. Stuff like that.
IN: And the counselors?
R1: Well, they don't ever ask about my work. They just always want to know how I'm feeling, how's things at home, remind me not to be tardy or to miss school. That kind of stuff. Only Mrs. X and Mr. Z ask me about my reading and did I read any at the other school.

Corresponding with the above was the notion that *what* was read was not as important as the *kind* of book selected from the library or from the teacher's classroom selection of reading materials. Several students complained that no one was interested in whether *they* (the students) could read the books selected from the library, but whether or not the words in the books were judged to be of the appropriate difficulty level for the student's age or grade level.

R2: We have to check out chapter books from the library.
IN: Do you finish the chapter books before you have to take them back?
R2: Sometimes.

IN: Do you finish the chapter books before you have to take them

back?
R8: Sometimes. Sometimes the words is too hard and it take you longer to read the words.

IN: Who decides what you will read in school for pleasure, like library books?
R7: The teacher or the librarian. There's a rule in the library that you can check out what you want but you have to have one thing that's a chapter book, then you can check out anything else you want.

IN: Tell me about when you don't enjoy reading.
R8: When you have to git chapter books from the liberry. Mostly, there's no pictures in 'em. Mostly there's just words and you ain't 'lowed to take 'em out if they ain't for you.
IN: What do you mean by "for you", "if they aren't for you?" Do you mean the books?
R8: Yeah. You have to have one book that's how old you are or what grade you are. Then you can git a magazine or somethin' else.

Key point: Meaning and usefulness of reading material selection was apparently perceived as missing for these students. It would appear that no one has taken the time to explain the importance of the book selection process to the children participating in the reading program.

Theme 4 - Boring Reading

Another point of reference made by students was that the after-school program was often boring and/or not enjoyable for them, especially if they were in the program for the second year of its existence.

IN: How often do you stay after school?
R5: Last year when I first did it I stayed after almost every week. This year I don't stay after so much.
IN: Why don't you stay as often?
R5: I don't enjoy it as much this year as I did last year.
IN: Can you tell me why that is?
R5: Last year it was sorta' new and all. This year it's kinda' boring. We just do the same thing all the time.

Many times reading was not done for enjoyment. Rather, the time sometimes turned into a required study table or study time because the student had not done a particular class assignment. Teachers then brought work to the after-school program for the student to do while he or she stayed to supposedly get credit for "recreational reading", that is, reading for enjoyment. Students complained that they had to stay quiet and were not allowed to read with peers in partners or in small groups.

R2: People could lighten up.
IN: Can you tell me what you mean exactly?
R2: Well, like, Mrs. L is always got this look on her face. Even my mom don't look like that. She (Mrs. L) never smiles. How can you have fun with somebody like that? Everything has got to be serious-like.

IN: Can you tell me why you don't stay after school to read?
R8: Boring. There's nobody to read to. You have to be quiet.

IN: Can you tell me why you don't get to do the things you most like to do (in reading)?
R7: You have to be quiet and having somebody read isn't quiet.
IN: Do you think it's OK to have noise when you're reading?
R7: Yeah.
IN: Why is that? What does the noise mean to you?
R7: It means people are busy, that they like what they're doing, and that they're sharing something they like.

Key point: How can the program develop life-long readers who read for enjoyment if the program does not do that itself? Students did not observe adults reading. Students did not share the joy of reading *with* adults. Students were, in fact, basically prohibited from sharing the joy of reading books with their own peers due to the "Be quiet" rule that is generally enforced in the school library. It would seem that the opposite of each of these observations would be needed in order to promote reading as a life-long activity to be enjoyed alone or with others.

Theme 5 - Adult Influences

Related to the above themes was the absence of adult role models for

recreational reading. I observed adults reading to younger students but on only one occasion did I observe an adult reading to the fifth grade students. Adults monitored student behavior and kept them quiet, especially the older ones. Adults saw to it that school rules and program rules were followed and assisted with students signing in, checking out books, passing out materials, name tags, etc.; but, adults did not model reading for enjoyment. In fact, adults modeled the opposite at times, as mentioned earlier, when they did not allow students to select a book of their own choice, when they gave students school work to do rather than allowing the students to read and relax, and when they expected the older students to be quiet and not share reading materials with one another.

R4: You don't get to do as much as a fifth grader as you get to do if you're a first or second grader.
IN: What do you mean by that?
R4: They (first and second graders) always have something going on. Lots of things, things that are fun. We just read. It should be funner.
IN: What would make it more fun for you?
R4: Somebody could read something exciting to us. Something that would make us laugh a lot.

On the other hand, most students recalled favorite individuals in the program who made an impression on the students and caused them to want to return each week.

R2: Mrs. H likes me to stay. She's kinda' nice.
IN: Is she a teacher here?
R2: No, she's an assistant. But we get along OK together. She don't get snotty with me if I laugh or something.

I did not see any parents (except for two or three assisting with the monitoring of students) participating in the after-school program as adult models for recreational reading, selecting materials, reading with students, and so on. In fact, some students indicated that modeling the importance of reading by adults also did not occur in the home.

IN: Do your parents want you to participate and stay after school to read?

R5: Yeah, but they don't care if I don't stay after. It's about half and half. They want me to stay but they don't care if I don't want to stay.

IN: Do your parents read at home?
R3: Yeah, sometimes. They don't read much. They get the newspaper but just look at it.

While some students indicated very little reading modeled at home, other students credited their parents, more so than they credited their teachers, for their involvement and interest in reading.

IN: Why do you stay?
R2: My mom wants me to stay. She thinks I need to read more. I don't read with the last group anymore. I'm in the middle group.
IN: Is that important? What group you read in?
R2: Nobody wants to be in the last group. Just dummies are in the last group.
IN: Why do you call it the last group?
R2: Because we always read last! She (teacher) always started with the best group and then worked down to us. We didn't have much time so she assigned us to do our work at home. My mom always helped me with it. So now I'm in the middle group.
IN: Did others move up to the middle group with you?
R2: Only D and me. Our mothers helped us at home with the assignments. The rest are still there.
IN: You mean in the last group?
R2: Yeah. They going to be there forever, I guess.

IN: How did you learn those new words?
R8: My mom tells me the word when I don't know it.

Key point: Adults would seemingly practice what they preach in modeling the importance of reading, both at school and in the home. Students have been given verbal messages by teachers and other adults that reading is important. An after-school reading program has been established that gives students an unspoken message that reading is important. And, yet,

many adults with whom these students interacted on a daily basis did not *show* that reading is important. The opposite was perceived by these students. On the other hand, those adults who were apparently aware of the significance of their own role in promoting the value and importance of reading both in and out of the classroom made a favorable impression on the children.

Theme 6 - Reading Aloud

Every interviewed student specifically indicated that they enjoyed being read to by an adult--parent, teacher, librarian, and so on; yet, as mentioned, during my weekly observations over a period of two months, I only witnessed this adult to child reading at the fifth grade level in the after-school program on one occasion.

> R1: I like it when the teacher reads to us. She reads funny, or sad, or something--whatever it's supposed to be. Everybody's quiet when she reads.
> IN: And you enjoy that a lot?
> R1: Yes. She don't do it as much as she used to do it 'cause we got so much work to do now.
>
> R6: Sometimes Miss T or Mr. W read to us. I like it because I can just listen and think about it.

Students indicated that parents might read to younger siblings at home but not to them.

> IN: Do your parents read to you or to your younger brothers and sisters?
> R6: Not to me. Mama reads to them if they ask.
> IN: Do they ask?
> R6: Not much.
>
> IN: Does anyone read to you at home?
> R5: Sometimes my mom reads to me and sometimes I read to her. Mostly, though, she reads to my little sister. I'm probably too old for her to read to me now.

Of special interest was the fact that all the students interviewed indicated that reading to younger children was an enjoyable thing to do.

> R7: We read to little kids sometimes, too. That's fun most of the time.
>
> R8: Or if I read to somebody younger then me, I don't have no problem with the words 'cause I be readin' a book for them, not me.
> IN: Did you enjoy this (reading at the pre-school)?
> R8: Oh, yeah.
> IN: How did it make you feel?
> R8: It made me feel good. I was responsible for bein' the teacher.

Listening to others read, according to the students, apparently helped expand their vocabulary. Related to this theme was the idea for many of the students that while reading to others they were more apt to have someone readily available to offer assistance. This suggests that reading to, and with, others is a major source and way for "learning new words" for these students.

> R8: See, the words is sometimes hard. When you read to somebody they can help you with the words.
> IN: Did you learn new words when you were reading to your mom?
> R8: Oh, yeah. I learned a lot of new words.

Key point: We may be overlooking a valuable resource when it comes to using older students as role models to younger students to develop a love of reading. It also appears that the importance of adult and peer team reading in assisting students who are behind in reading ability cannot be overlooked. Each of the students interviewed indicated that reading with a partner, in small groups, or with an adult providing assistance, such as a parent or assistant, provided them with the extra boost they needed in order to be more successful in accomplishing reading activities.

Part III - Summary

In this study, I was interested in knowing how the after-school recreational reading program structure was perceived from the students' point of view--planned reading activities, rewards or incentives used to encourage reading, program guidelines, and so on. Therefore, upon the completion of the field observations and student interviews, a brief review of recent literature regarding the use of rewards and incentives was done, especially in terms of rewards and incentives being used to motivate students to participate in, or complete, certain tasks within classroom-like settings, such as the library setting for the after-school reading program.

It became apparent to me as I observed and interviewed that the students placed a great deal of importance on the earning of various rewards as well as on the rewards themselves. It appeared that they measured their reading success in the after-school reading program by the rewards earned for achieving certain benchmarks of time throughout the year. It also appeared that for many of these students, reading outside of the regular classroom would not have been done at all, especially in families where reading was not perceived as an important activity, had it not been for the fact that the students could earn a reward for reading. The discussion that follows addresses these interpretations.

Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Student Motivation:
Alfie Kohn (1993), a former teacher and noted opponent in the use of rewards or incentives in or out of the classroom, argues that the practice of giving rewards for the completion of tasks reduces a child's desire to accept more challenging tasks. He further claims that this dependence on rewards for performance then becomes a life-long phenomenon. Speaking to a group of educators in Indianapolis recently, Kohn (in Rochester, 1994) said, "Rewarding students for academic performance . . . actually is bribing students to learn. . . . Rewards and punishment are not opposites; they are different sides of the same coin. Rewards are just control by seduction" (p. 1).

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), two noted researchers in the area of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, have found that "rewards can undermine motivation if used in a controlling way; (but) when used to

convey to people a sense of appreciation for work well done, [rewards] will tend to be experienced informationally and will maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation" (p. 300).

Mark Lepper and David Greene (1974) believe from their research findings that, "If rewards provide [a student] with new information about his ability at a particular task, this may bolster his feeling of competence and his desire to engage in that task for its own sake. . . . If the child does not possess the basic skills to discover the intrinsic satisfaction of complex activities such as reading, the use of extrinsic rewards may be required to equip him with these skills" (p. 54).

Gerald Bracey (1994) claims that a "substantial body of research" shows that if people are given extrinsic rewards for something they like to do anyway, they will then begin to do the activity not for fun, but only for the rewards. Bracey, however, has questioned the generalizability of some of this research, especially that which was recently completed by Hennessey and Zbikowski (in Bracey, 1994) in which they stated, "Over 15 years of research have confirmed that offering a reward for an enjoyable behavior can decrease the likelihood that the behavior will be performed under subsequent conditions" (p. 494).

In other words, Bracey wonders if the results of Hennessey and Zbikowski's study on the use of rewards in a suburban school system would be the same as the results of a similar study on the use of rewards in an inner city school attended by children of much lower economic means and lacking the advantages of their more wealthy peers in the suburbs. Paul Chance (1993) echoes Bracey's thoughts, "If students show little or no interest in an activity, it is silly to refuse to provide rewards for fear of undermining their interest in the activity" (p. 789).

Implications of Literature Review to this Study:
It is felt that the students who were the focus of my study generally fit the description of students of which Chance spoke. There was apparently a perceived need on the part of the educators in this school to provide students with rewards in order to encourage them to participate in an after-school reading program designed to promote reading, as well as to maintain the increased reading time over an extended period of time to improve reading skills. This need to encourage more reading time was

mostly due to the students' low academic achievement level in the area of reading, their many moves from school to school, and the lack of parental influence on the importance of reading (and education, in general, in many cases).

Program Components:

Tied to the use of rewards to encourage students to read is the apparent need, based on my observations and interviews with students, to make the reading activities more meaningful and useful by understanding the students' feelings toward certain reading materials, why some activities appeared "more fun" than others, and the students' perceptions regarding how they best learned to read. Students indicated that they read so that they could earn credit for the time spent reading in order to receive rewards of varying nature. While these rewards were very important to each student with a variety of feelings being posited on how they felt for earning the rewards, from feeling good to feeling proud and important, every student struggled with the reading issues presented in the other themes--that is, lacking their own choice of reading materials, doing the same things week after week, not being able to read for enjoyment, being prohibited from sharing reading materials (having to stay quiet), and missing the fun and excitement of reading to others or being read to by others. Consequently, in spite of the rewards, many were not reading as much in the second year of the program as they had in the first year.

It is apparent that a change is needed in the make-up of the after-school reading program itself in order for it to be as effective as it might be. Fielding and Pearson (1994) recommend the following four components for any program designed to promote reading comprehension:

*large amounts of time for actual text reading
*teacher-directed instruction in comprehension strategies
*opportunities for peer and collaborative learning
*occasions for students to talk to a teacher and one another about their responses to reading

Fielding and Pearson believe that these four components will help students become "interested in and to succeed at reading--providing them the intrinsic motivation for continual learning" (p. 62).

The after-school reading program in this school provides for large amounts of time for actual text reading. What it apparently lacks, and what the students indicated was a need, are the other three components, especially peer and collaborative learning opportunities and occasions to talk to others about their responses to reading. Fielding and Pearson argue that anything less than a well-rounded instructional program "is a form of discrimination against children who have difficulty with reading" (p. 67). They further claim that in order to develop independent, motivated readers, students must be afforded the opportunity to self-select materials that are within their ability levels. They state, "It is through such reading that children can experience the successful comprehension, learning, independence, and interest that will motivate future reading" (p. 67).

Dr. George Gonzalez, a noted professor and consultant in the area of bilingual education and ESL (English as a Second Language), as well as an author for the Scott-Foresman reading series, believes that the emphasis given to the reading process in elementary schools has resulted in the neglect of the other language processes--especially listening and speaking. Gonzalez (1994) states, "A strong connection exists between aural and oral language competence and reading and writing proficiency. . . . Of immense importance to reading comprehension is an understanding of what stories are. Students who have had few experiences hearing stories read aloud lack familiarity with the patterns of stories" (p. 5).

In summary, the use of rewards alone does not promote continuous, long-term student motivation to read. Furthermore, a program designed to interest students to read where no such interest previously existed may not be enough. But, a program that utilizes the right mix of rewards along with meaningful and useful reading activities for the students may experience success. Carole Ames (1992) examined the classroom learning environment in relation to achievement goal theory of motivation and has posited the following:

> There is considerable research evidence demonstrating the undermining effects of rewards when they are perceived as bribes or controlling and when they have little relevance to the behavior in question (e.g., Deci

> & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, because rewards are often public and given on a differential basis, they can render ability salient. Nevertheless, when made contingent on student effort (Brophy, 1987; Stipek & Kowalski, 1989), on progress in relation to short-term goals (Schunk, 1989), or on meaningful aspects of performance (Brophy, 1983a, 1983b) rewards can enhance achievement-directed behavior. There is even some evidence to suggest that rewards can sometimes increase task persistence on ego-involving tasks by shifting the focus away from one's ability (Miller & Hom, 1990) (p. 265).

Implications of this Research Study on Supplemental Reading Programs:

The implications of this qualitative research study of a Chapter 1 sponsored after-school reading program which specifically focused on the observation and interview of disadvantaged fifth grade students are two-fold for others interested in such a program. First, the use of rewards to encourage students to both attend the program and to read apparently worked initially, and was still working for some students who perceived the rewards as being important to them for a variety of reasons, including the feeling of pride generated for having earned them, the feeling of success for having read for required periods of time, and the opportunity to have something tangible that they might not otherwise have. For others, the rewards being offered were not enough to keep them fully interested.

Second, and perhaps of greater importance, the students themselves questioned the value of the program in serving their particular reading needs and wishes. From these disadvantaged, academically low students, I was given the foundation of an excellent reading program, one of which educators everywhere ought to be cognizant through their many workshops, in-services, university training, and so on. The program is simple: provide time for meaningful and useful instruction/activities, even if the instruction or activity is just for the purpose of reading enjoyment; provide time to read, to share, to listen, and to speak; and, provide time to reward students in a variety of ways--from a pat on the back, to a certificate, to a T-shirt--for their efforts and successes.

The following student suggestions might be beneficial for such a program:

IN: What ideas do you have to make the after-school reading program more exciting for you?

R5: You could let us fifth graders be the teachers for the little kids.

R3: You might tell the people here that it's OK to talk about a book. We *really* would talk about the book if they'd let us.

R8: If you could read with somebody, you'd have some help with the words.

R1: You could get my teacher to read to us. Everybody'd listen real good. That's the best thing to do that I can think of right now.

IN: What about earning things for reading. Tell me how you feel about continuing something like that.

R1: I think they should keep it up. Lots of kids won't read unless they got something to read for.

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Appendix A

Observation Questions

Foreshadowed Problem: The purpose of this study is to better understand the feelings and concerns of fifth grade students toward a recreational reading program designed to assist them in improving their academic growth and success in the classroom, particularly in the area of reading.

Potential questions for which I will seek answers during my observations are as follows:

1. What is meant by "Recreational Reading Program" in this building?

2. What kinds of reading activities do students do that constitute "recreational reading"?

3. How much time do students spend reading after school in this program?

4. Do members of students' families join them in this after school hours reading program?

5. What kinds of reading activities do the children engage in? Specifically, do they read alone, in pairs, in small groups?

6. If in small groups, do only certain children read while others listen; or, do children seem to take turns? If only certain children read, do they appear to be the better readers or are they seen more as leaders or are they aggressive?

7. Do the fifth grade students read to/with younger students or do they tend to stay with their own age group?

8. Do students interact with adults during the reading activities? Specifically, do students read to/with adults or vice versa?

9. What behaviors are exhibited that indicate student enjoyment of the reading activities?

10. What behaviors are exhibited that indicate a lack of student enjoyment of the reading activities?

11. Are there activities that seem to be enjoyed more so than others by the majority of students present? What are those activities? How do students show that enjoyment?

12. What activities do not seem to be enjoyed as much by the majority of students present? How do students show a lack of enjoyment?

13. How many students are participating in this week's activities? Is this the norm? (Need to be aware of this over time--if less or more, try to observe why. Is there something extra special to draw students one time over another time?)

14. Do the adults present seem to enjoy the time spent overseeing and participating in the reading activities with the children? Do children seem aware of adult enjoyment?

15. What kinds (and how much) noise does one hear during recreational reading time? Specifically, do I hear noise indicating fun and excitement with the reading activities, sharing books, etc.? Or, do I hear silence and observe monitoring to maintain silence?

16. Are there established rules involved with the after school program that all students are aware of in advance?

17. Do students seem to know and follow the established rules of the after school reading program? Specifically, do they monitor themselves to stay involved with the activities?

18. In students do not stay involved in reading activities, how do the adults present handle the situations?

19. Are students advised they will have to leave if they do not follow the reading activities according to established rules?

20. Are students aware of rewards for participating in the after school reading program?

21. Do students appear interested in the rewards that may be earned? Do they talk about rewards? Is the talk positive or negative?

22. Do the adults involved with the recreational reading program use rewards as bribes or threats to elicit student attention to reading activities? Are the rewards even mentioned by the adults in any way?

23. Do students appear to monitor their own progress toward reaching a reward in the recreational reading program?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Potential questions to be asked each student are as follows:

1. How long have you participated in the Recreational Reading Program?

2. How long have you attended this school?

3. Do you stay to read in the after-school reading program this year?

4. Do you read at home? Do members of your family join you in reading time at home? What kind of reading activities do you and your family enjoy together?

5. Tell me about the reading activities planned for you in the after school program. Do you attend all of these activities?

6. If you don't attend the after school reading activities, tell me why not.

7. Do you think the extra reading has helped you in school? Can you tell me how or in what way?

8. How do you feel about your reading ability in the classroom? Has it improved since you began participating in the after school/at home recreational reading program?

9. Do you think you will continue to read as much as you are reading when you leave this school and go to middle school? What makes you say that?

10. What activities have you enjoyed most in the program? The least?

11. Do you feel that the program should be continued? If so, what suggestions or advice would you like to give that you think would make the program better?

12. Have you earned rewards or honors for participating in this reading program? Tell me about these. How does this make you feel?

Appendix C

Interview Form

Student Name _____ **Date** _____

How long in this school? In program?

Tell me about after-schooi reading program?

Received rewards for participating? Tell about. How did you feel?

Read at home? Parents? Tell about reading at home.

Kinds of reading activities enjoyed? Tell why.

Kinds not enjoyed? Why?

How do you feel about activities in program? About "rules" of program?

What could be done better or differently?

Extra reading helpful? In what way?

Tell feelings about reading in general.